

There are now millions of Americans who claim more than one heritage or whose cultural and ancestral roots lead them to reject the American racial dichotomy, said Roderick Harrison, a demographer for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington think-tank.

Harrison said his research has revealed an unprecedented change in attitudes about race, especially in metropolitan areas of California, New York, Texas, Illinois, New Jersey and Florida—states that have substantial black, white and Hispanic populations.

Attitudes are changing, he said, because a nation that numerically and conceptually has been divided is becoming more multiracial and multiethnic.

"When people look at a white, black, Hispanic or Asian person 40 years from now I doubt racial or ethnic identity is going to mean the same thing as it means to us," Harrison said. "We won't want complete assimilation but the ability to retain some of our cultures."

For many people in South Florida, a pluralistic world exists now. Hispanics, for example, generally do not define themselves in terms of race—although they're aware that American culture heavily relies upon it.

"I know it sounds corny, but hopefully, we will reach a day when we talk about each other's culture rather than the color of our skin," said Washington Collado, a native of the Dominican Republic who like many people from the Caribbean has a mixed ancestry.

"I never am put in a position where I have to define myself by color," said Collado, 36, of Coconut Creek. "That's a question I don't even know how to answer."

Collado and his wife, Carmen, want their three sons, Mario, 9, Alejandro, 5, and Miguel, 1, to think of themselves as they do—as Dominicans and Hispanics.

"Without being blinded by the fact that they undoubtedly have to mark a little box that says Hispanic, I don't think my kids see themselves as dark skinned," Collado said. "Skin color is not the most important thing. I would rather my kids know who they are."

Such an outlook on race is prevalent among many Latin Americans, who prefer to view themselves as a diverse group united by culture and language.

"In their own countries, national identity is so important that racial identity isn't as important," said Helen Safa, a retired professor of Anthropology and Latin American Studies at the University of Florida.

"That doesn't mean there is no prejudice and discrimination," Safa said. "There is. But racial identity tends to be subordinated to the national identity."

Harrison and other demographers say it's possible that future generations of Hispanics and other immigrants of mixed heritage could classify themselves more along racial lines. But it is just as possible that they will not.

For much of the nation's history, however, the racial divide was such that the children of interracial marriages—as well as black immigrants—found a home only in black America.

Moreover, until about three decades ago, 16 states had laws designed to prevent marriages between people of different races. Then, in 1967, the Supreme Court ruled anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional.

Since then, the climate of intolerance and separation that led to such laws has faded. The number of mixed marriages has steadily risen, as has the number of people of African descent and mixed ancestry who have immigrated to the United States.

But even today, mixed couples often must overcome barriers. Though more common, such unions are not universally accepted.

Often, the sternest opposition still comes from family members.

That's what Trayce Denise Santoro, who is black, discovered four years ago when she married her husband Filippo, the son of Italian immigrants.

"His mother and father were completely against it," said Santoro, 36, of West Palm Beach. "They didn't come to the wedding or anything. They didn't want to meet me."

Since then, however, Santoro's in-laws have warmed to her and she does not hold their feelings against them. Santoro even wants her children, 2-year-old Filippo II and Lena Marina, 3 months, to learn how to speak Italian so they can better enjoy their dual heritage.

When Trayce Santoro looks at her two children, she sees both black and white—the way she hopes they will also will view themselves. That's why she supports the efforts to establish a new multiracial category on the Census and other forms.

"I would prefer them to choose multiracial if biracial isn't on the list or they couldn't choose (both) black and white," she said. "I wouldn't want them to pick one or the other."

Sociologists say it's no surprise that multiracial and multiethnic people are beginning to reject the nation's outdated racial codes.

Sarah Willie, a professor of sociology and black studies at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pa., outside Philadelphia, said civil rights leaders and black nationalists laid the groundwork for the nation's broader racial and ethnic framework a generation ago.

That African-Americans could celebrate their roots made it possible for today's immigrants to take such pride in their countries of origin.

No longer so intent upon embracing American culture at the expense of their own, many Hispanics and others now proudly display the flag of their homeland on their cars.

"We forget that nobody was putting a flag on their car 30 years ago," Willie said. "That was the tail end of a very explicit assimilationist policy in the U.S."

"Most immigrants subscribed to that at an incredible cost to language and culture. Ties to the past were lost."

She believes integration and the evolving sense of pride multiracial people have developed in their diverse backgrounds has allowed many to redefine themselves.

"People will still tend to identify with a group," said Willie, who has a black and a white mother. "But they will say I'm black or Latino or Asian—and I have another parent on the other side."

Allowing people to label themselves as they choose may cause waves, however.

Some Americans—white and black—are offended when they see others stress nationalistic roots.

And black Americans may lift an eyebrow when a person they perceive as black acts as if he or she is something else—a sign that being black in the American sense isn't good enough for them.

But those attitudes, too, will change, said Tanya Simons-Oparah, assistant director for outreach for the Broward County Library.

"If you choose not to want to identify with black people I feel badly for you because I know the riches and the value of being of African descent," said Simons-Oparah, 52, an African-American whose parents are from the Bahamas and Panama. "We can't claim everybody."

Harrison said the degree to which children of mixed marriages claim "multiracial" as an identity will help determine how far the changes in attitude go.

"When we look at some of the earlier success for the multiracial categories (on test

Census surveys and school district forms, for example) about 50 percent of the people who exercised that option were under 18," Harrison said. It's reflective of the recent acceptance of mixed marriage, he said.

If Masters is any indication, the change in identification will come because biracial offspring don't want to pretend as if one of their two parents doesn't exist. Even if they consider themselves black, as she does.

"I can't possibly choose between them," Masters said. "They're both from very rich cultures and I have to respect them both."

TRIBUTE TO THE MEDIA

HON. PAUL RYAN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Bob Branen and the local newspapers in my district who are helping the refugees of Kosovo. I strongly believe the most effective way to help those in need is through an individual's time and efforts to volunteer at local charities and churches. This works when helping the homeless and hungry in your own community, or when helping the homeless and hungry thousands of miles away in war-torn Kosovo.

Southern Lakes Media, Inc. of Burlington and Walworth Newspapers, Inc. of Walworth have launched a nine-city effort to generate support of those fleeing Kosovo. Bob Branen, president of the newspaper chains, is asking, through editorials and advertisements, for Wisconsin citizens to donate to World Relief, an international assistance organization.

World Relief is working with Albania's churches to assist the men, women and children who were forced to flee their homes without food, water or clothing. This organization is fighting to give these refugees not only material comforts, but spiritual hope as well. The Kosovars, expelled from their homeland by Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, are finding safety in the open homes and open arms of the people of Tirana. The outpouring of generosity by my neighbors in Wisconsin translates into meaningful action, half a world away, for the victims of the Kosovo conflict.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to honor their extraordinary example and encourage them to continue their efforts and I commend Mr. Branen for the initiative he took to inform his newspaper readers.

TRIBUTE TO ADREA G. COHEN

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 20, 1999

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call to your attention the deeds of Adrea Cohen of Belleville, New Jersey on this the occasion of her Retirement and Testimonial Dinner. Adrea is being honored tonight because of her 25 years of service to the township of Belleville and the Belleville Public Library and Information Center. It is only fitting that we gather here tonight in her honor, for she epitomizes caring and generosity of spirit.

Adrea Cohen has served as Director of the Belleville Public Library and Information Center since 1993. She began as its Assistant Library Director in 1974 after completing her